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UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

Power play in Carlsbad / If possible, inland site for new plant is better

Monday, February 1, 2010 at 12:04 a.m.

A new power plant proposed along Interstate 5 in Carlsbad will be debated in four days of public testimony starting today. The ultimate outcome could change the North County landscape for a half-century or more.

The hearings before one or more California Energy Commission members are part of a long process that began in 2007, with more regulatory hurdles ahead.

NRG of Princeton, N.J., proposes a so-called peaker plant that would run on a reserve basis. It would be a giant peaker plant, at 540 megawatts, and one without any known contract to buy its power.

The 32-acre site is bounded by Agua Hedionda Lagoon, I-5 and railroad tracks where empty oil tanks now sit. There is no connection between this project and the ancient Encina Power Plant to the west, which is also owned by NRG and which is being phased out of existence.

Carlsbad has offered alternative sites, so far rejected by NRG, and its council voted 5-0 against this one in a symbolic protest. Business groups generally support this site while key environmental groups, curiously, are silent.

When we editorialized 17 months ago, this site seemed like a good idea – or at least the only realistic choice. But much has changed in 17 months, and the Energy Commission must confront serious questions.

• A half century ago, power plants were sited along the coast because they needed water for cooling. That is not the case today.

• Carlsbad sees the opportunity for a greenbelt of public uses stretching two and one-half miles along the lagoon's southern edge. It could be a last chance for a break in the urban sprawl swallowing our coastline.

• SDG&E is in discussions with Carlsbad to sell its adjacent holdings, relocate and help make Carlsbad's dream happen. Post-Encina, NRG's peaker plant would be the only major industrial obstruction.

Energy plants that do not need ocean water do not belong on the coast. This page similarly editorialized for the removal of the South Bay Power Plant from Chula Vista's bayfront. The California Energy Commission agreed, unanimously rejecting an expansion proposal there.

Carlsbad is willing to find NRG another site inland and help it get necessary permits. NRG, according to an executive, could reap up to $200 million in selling its parcel.

We believe it would be in everyone's interest for the commission to urge NRG and Carlsbad to launch a good-faith effort to explore other possible sites. That may ultimately prove impossible, given the difficulty of siting power plants. But it is worth another try.

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http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2010/feb/01/1ed1top

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The North County Times - Californian

ARNOLD: People vs. power plant idea

By THOMAS K. ARNOLD -- For the North County Times | Posted: Wednesday, February 3, 2010 12:00 am

It's crunch time.

The state Energy Commission is holding a series of public meetings this week about the proposed new power plant on Carlsbad's coast, and opponents who believe our beautiful beach is no place for heavy industry have their hands full.

They're fighting an uphill fight against a state agency that's going to make the final call by the end of this year, with a preliminary ruling, from the two board members conducting the hearings, expected as early as this spring.

At stake is not just an ugly eyesore on the shores of Carlsbad, a city that relies heavily on tourism for its economy. The bigger issue is how much of a say the voting public really has in the mechanisms of government.

While the proposed new power plant will have a detrimental effect on Carlsbad, from a visual blight to increased air pollution, the citizens of Carlsbad and their elected officials are powerless to stop it from being built. The fate of the power plant rests squarely in the hands of the Energy Commission, an appointed board that has a history of doing things its way, public sentiment be damned.

Taxation without representation? This is it, baby. This is it.

NRG Energy, the out-of-town power giant that operates the existing plant and is hell-bent on building a new one, certainly has the upper hand.

The company owns the 95-acre Encina Power Station property on the southwestern banks of the Agua Hedionda Lagoon and argues that it should be able to do what it wants with its land, particularly since the site has hosted a power plant for upwards of 50 years.

And yet this truly is a case where the greater, common good trumps private property rights ---- particularly since the new plant, unlike the old one, doesn't rely on ocean water for cooling and thus does not need to be situated on the coast.

Hopefully, this week's hearings will attract a healthy throng of Carlsbad residents who realize a new plant is bad news for all of us ---- and who can articulate that point to the Energy Commission. And hopefully, our state energy commissioners will listen and take to heart their comments and conclusions, their facts and their figures, their passion and their pleas.

Carlsbad should be able to control its own destiny. State energy commissioners need to take the pulse of the city and act accordingly. I realize that's a tall order, but there's always hope.

And besides, isn't that how our government is supposed to work? As Thomas Jefferson once said, "The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government."

THOMAS K. ARNOLD writes from Carlsbad. Contact him at TKARNOLD@aol.com.

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APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION FOR THE *CARLSBAD ENERGY CENTER PROJECT*

Docket No. 07-AFC-6
PROOF OF SERVICE
(Revised 1/27/2010)

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DECLARATION OF SERVICE

I, Julie Baker, declare that on ***February 5, 2010***, I served and filed copies of the attached, ***editorials from San Diego Union Tribune and North County Times***, dated ***February 1 and 3 respectively***. The original document, filed with the Docket Unit, is accompanied by a copy of the most recent Proof of Service list, located on the web page for this project at: [http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/carlsbad/index.html]. The document has been sent to both the other parties in this proceeding (as shown on the Proof of Service list) and to the Commission's Docket Unit, in the following manner:

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I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Julie Baker
February 5, 2010

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